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TAGS: IZ PGOV PREL TU
SUBJECT: TURKISH AMBASSADOR DISCUSSES PM INVITATION,
WORKING GROUP, TRILATERAL

Classified By: Ambassador Ryan C. Crocker for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: On June 17, Turkish Ambassador to Iraq Kanbay told the Ambassador that he had given Prime Minister Maliki an invitation to visit Turkey in late June, but the PM had declined. He said Turkey is preparing for the Neighboring Countries Energy Working Group meeting to be followed by a trilateral (Turkey, Iraq, U.S.) meeting on energy, but the details had yet to be worked out. He asked the Ambassador about recent hydrocarbon law negotiations and the results of Deputy Secretary Negroponte's visit to Iraq. Kanbay noted that the Iraqi Kurds' hydrocarbon policy was indicative of their larger attitude toward the GOI. END SUMMARY.

Maliki Declines Turkey Invite, Kanbay Praises Maliki

¶2. (C) Kanbay told the Ambassador he had extended to Maliki an invitation to visit Turkey prior to the working group, describing June 26-27 as the ideal time for Maliki's visit. In this way it could lead into the Energy Working Group meeting, June 28-29. PM spokesman Ali Dabbagh told Kanbay there was no room in the PM's schedule for a visit and explained that the PM does not think it appropriate to make frequent trips outside the country. Kanbay accepted this, telling the Ambassador this reminded him of the revered founder of Turkey, Ataturk, who rarely left the country and led by example. Kanbay acknowledged that it may not be practical to visit now due to the PM's domestic duties and poor relations with the neighboring states. Kanbay nevertheless called on Maliki to visit soon, but noted that July would be a bad month to visit because of elections in Turkey.

¶3. (C) Kanbay said he had given Maliki a letter that morning in response to the PM's proposal to form a bilateral high-level committee to deal with issues such as security that are of mutual concern. Maliki made the proposal to Turkish MFA Iraq Envoy Oguz Celikkol during the latter's May visit to Iraq. Kanbay said he still does not know what Maliki has in mind for the bilateral committee, but a visit to Turkey would be the ideal time to work out the details.

¶4. (C) He expressed full confidence in the Maliki government and acknowledged that no one, including former Prime Minister Allawi, could fill Maliki's role as PM. He said Maliki seemed more warm-hearted and less suspicious during this visit than previously. He thought Maliki was sincere and trying to act like an "Iraqi" PM, vice a sectarian one.

Working Group Needs Work

¶5. (C) According to Kanbay, Turkey is preparing for the

Neighboring Countries Energy Working Group meeting to be held June 28-29, to be followed by a trilateral (Turkey, Iraq, U.S.) meeting on energy. He described the agenda of the working group as focused on Iraq's needs, such as refined petroleum products but did not go into specifics. Kanbay said thus far no concrete focus had emerged for the trilateral, but it was planned as a follow-up to the working group meeting - one meeting could encourage the other. He thought it would be chaired by the Ministry of Energy. Representatives from state pipeline and gas company Botash might co-chair if the discussion includes corporations. The Ambassador told Kanbay it was important to ensure the right people are there for the trilateral since the working group would be at one level and the trilateral at another. Kanbay said Celikkol was arranging this meeting. He asked the Ambassador to urge the GOI to name representatives to the group, expressing the hope that they would be senior Oil Ministry officials.

Hydrocarbons and Kurdish Autonomy

¶ 16. (C) The Ambassador updated Kanbay on the status of the hydrocarbons negotiations and the results of Deputy Secretary Negroponte's visit to Iraq. Kanbay was particularly interested in the results of Secretary Negroponte's talks with Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) President Massoud Barzani. He expressed frustration in his dealings with the Kurds, noting that every time KRG Prime Minister Nечирван Barzani is scheduled to visit Turkey, Massoud will make an inflammatory statement. Kanbay wondered if the KRG's messages are deliberately mixed.

¶ 17. (C) Kanbay claimed he saw in the Kurd's position on

BAGHDAD 00002034 002 OF 002

hydrocarbons legislation indicators of their overall stance toward the GOI; the Kurdish demand for deal-making power with foreign companies shows their desire for increased autonomy within the Iraqi state. Explaining this further, he said in a civil war, local interests and tribal politics come to the fore, and each player tries to pull the issue to his or her own side. Continuing, he said during visits to Iraqi ministries he gets the impression that no one is unified under one GOI authority but rather represents their own interests. In Iraq, he said this is like stray cats fighting over garbage or like players on a soccer team that do not work together.

¶ 18. (C) Kanbay asked if passing hydrocarbons and de-Ba'athification legislation would help unify the country. The Ambassador responded that it would encourage the Iraqis to do more, but the U.S. could not count on dramatic changes. He said the political system imposes limits on the PM.

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